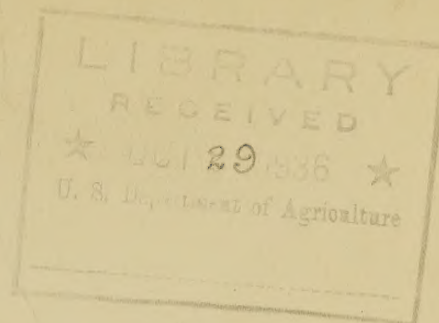


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C O N S U M E R   Q U E S T I O N M A R K S

Suggestions for  
Six Program Series on  
CONSUMER PROBLEMS

(Tentative)

Prepared by  
CONSUMERS' COUNSEL DIVISION  
AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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## WHAT ARE CONSUMER PROBLEMS?

In its simplest terms, the basic problem of consumers is this: How can I get the greatest satisfaction from the expenditure of my money?

In the purchase of goods and services every buyer wants one, or a combination, of three things: (1) the best quality for a specified sum of money, (2) the greatest quantity for a specified sum of money, (3) a specified quantity and quality at a fair price.

The goal of consumers in the marketplace is an increasing quantity of goods, of known quality, available at fair prices.

These three aspects of the problems encountered by consumers in acquiring goods and services are presented as topics for discussion in the following pages. Another major consumer problem, but one which is not discussed here, is that of learning how best to utilize goods and services so as to obtain the greatest possible satisfaction from them.

This summary of suggestions for six program series on consumer problems has been prepared in response to the rapidly growing demand from clubs, discussion groups, schools, labor organizations, and cooperatives for study material. The material in this outline is presented as a source from which leaders of discussion groups may draw program suggestions. Each section is not to be considered a separate program. For example, the material on Government grading might be expanded to cover several meetings. Some groups may want to reserve this topic for a more extended treatment later, giving it only a brief review now in connection with other topics. Omit topics which do not meet the interests and needs of your group.

Listing of any reference to non-governmental agencies and publications in no way implies endorsement of the organization or the viewpoint expressed.

The Office of the Consumers' Counsel is interested in having a report of your experience in using this outline. Address: The Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.





## PROGRAM SERIES I

### CONSUMER QUESTIONMARKS ON QUALITY

This program series is intended to bring out the various kinds of quality questions which consumers encounter in their personal and household buying. The group should be encouraged to add to the list of specific questions given below. After these questions have been marshaled, they should be referred back to constantly at later meetings to determine to what extent present buying aids learned about answer them to the satisfaction of the group.

#### 1. BUYING BY SENSE

Taste, smell, and touch used to be fairly reliable guides to quality in buying. Apply these yardsticks of quality to a series of commodities. Make a list of commodities the quality of which everyone in the group agrees can be satisfactorily determined by taste, smell, and touch.

##### QUESTIONS:

- (a) Are taste, smell, and touch good guides in selecting the quality of canned tomatoes?
- (b) Are they good guides in selecting the kind of refrigerator you want?
- (c) Are they reliable guides in selecting silk?
- (d) Are they good guides in determining how much wool is in a "part wool" blanket?
- (e) Are they good guides in selecting cosmetics and medicines?

#### 2. BUYING BY PRICE

Make a similar list (as in 1) of the commodities the quality of which everyone in the group agrees can be satisfactorily determined by price.

##### QUESTIONS:

- (a) Is price a sure guide to quality of automobiles? Canned foods? Cosmetics? Fabrics? Clothes?

#### 3. BUYING WITH THE HELP OF ADVERTISING AND LABELS

Compare the labels on three cans of peas. Repeat this with labels on three sheets. Compare advertisements and descriptive material on three mechanical refrigerators.

##### QUESTIONS:

- (a) What do the three labels on the canned peas tell you about the size, color, tenderness, maturity, flavor, of the contents?





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- (b) What do the three labels on the sheets tell you about: thread count, warp and filling; tensile strength; percentage of sizing; finish; "first" or "second"; size before hemming, whether torn or cut, weight in ounces per square yard?
- (c) What do the refrigerator advertisements tell you about: temperatures maintained in different compartments; cubic feet of food storage space; square feet of shelf area; electricity, gas, or kerosene required for 24 hours of operation; nature of refrigerant used; voltage of supply circuit, if electric refrigerator; insulation materials and construction.

## 4. BUYING WITH THE HELP OF SALESMEN

To what extent can salesmen give you information on these points:

- (a) the durability of goods, (b) unit cost, (c) ingredients, (d) construction, and (e) colorfastness?

- 5. What other guides to quality are considered satisfactory by everyone in the group? Are these guides provided by impartial agencies, or by agencies financially interested in the sale or advertising of commodities? Do they provide a simple easily remembered scale of values? How are these quality standards checked against the individual commodity?

## REFERENCES:

- (a) "Consumer Buying", Suggestions for group programs, 1936, 40 pages. Address: American Home Economics Association, Mills Building, Washington, D. C. Price 25 cents.
- (b) "Scientific Consumer Purchasing", a study guide on buying problems, September 1935, 64 pages. Address: American Association of University Women, 1634 I Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.
- (c) "Quality Guides in Buying Sheets and Pillowcases", by Ruth O'Brien, January 1934, 8 pages. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Price 5 cents.
- (d) "Does Its Price Tell Her Its Quality?", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, July 9, 1934, pages 6-8. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.
- (e) "Household Refrigerators", Better Buymanship, No. 19. Address: Finance Corporation, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Price 3 cents
- (f) Report of the Consumers' Advisory Board of the NRA, Recommending Standards for the Household Ice Refrigerator Industry. Address: Consumers' Project, Department of Labor, Washington, D. C.
- (g) "Buy Your Automatic Refrigerator with Dollars and Sense", Extension Bulletin No. 166. Address: Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, Free.
- (h) "Evidences of the Need of Education for Efficient Purchasing", by Velma Phillips. Address: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, N. Y. Price \$1.50.
- (i) "Consumer Facilities for Judging Merchandise", mimeographed bulletin. Address: American Association of University Women, 1634 I Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.





## PROGRAM SERIES II

### HOW THE GOVERNMENT HELPS TO ANSWER CONSUMERS' QUESTIONS ON QUALITY

The Federal government carries on many activities which help consumers to know the quality of the products they buy. Among these activities are: (1) the setting up of quality grades, (2) the definition of sub-standard canned food, (3) the definition of food products, (4) the regulation of the labeling of foods and drugs, (5) the formulation of specifications, commercial standards, and codes of simplified practice, (6) the prohibition of trade practices which constitute unfair competition, (7) the policing of publicity circulated by mail.

#### 1. SETTING UP OF QUALITY GRADES

The grading of farm products is carried on by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the Department of Agriculture under authority granted by the Farm Products Inspection Law. This act provides for grading products into A, B, C, or other classifications on the basis of carefully prepared government standards. The A, B, C designations should not be confused with the definitions of sub-standard products which appear on labels as BELOW U. S. STANDARD - GOOD FOOD - NOT HIGH GRADE or as BELOW U. S. STANDARD - LOW QUALITY - BUT NOT ILLEGAL. The definition of sub-standard products is carried on by another bureau of the Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and this will be discussed later.

#### EXHIBIT:

Colored panel displays illustrating the official grade labeling of beef, lamb, veal, processed meats, poultry, eggs, butter, and canned fruits and vegetables are lent free to responsible organizations. Address: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Washington, D. C.

Also have for display a list of stores handling government graded goods in your community or neighborhood. You can get help in compiling this list by calling or writing the local or nearby office of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. See pages 8 to 10, SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON CONSUMER EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATION, available free from the Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C., for a list of local offices of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) What commodities are graded for quality by the Federal Government?
- (b) How many products showing government quality grades can you buy in your grocery store?





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- (c) What commodities which are not now graded would the members of your group like to see added to the list of graded commodities?
- (d) Who pays the cost of grading? How much, if anything, does it add to the price **you** pay for a dozen eggs, a can of corn, a pound of butter, a pound of roast beef, a pound of lamb?
- (e) If you cannot buy graded goods at the stores you now patronize how can you get them?

REFERENCES:

- (a) "Standard Facts", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, July 27, 1936, page 14. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (b) "You Know What You Get When You Buy U. S. Graded Beef", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, March 11, 1935, Page 8. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (c) "The Consumer and the Standardization of Farm Products", by Caroline B. Sherman, October 1935, pp. 14. Address: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (d) "Present Guides For Household Buying", by Ruth O'Brien, January 1936, pp. 35, Price 5 cents. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.
- (e) "National Standards for Farm Products", Bureau of Agricultural Economics, September 1935, pp. 55, Price 5 cents. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (f) "Grade Labeling of Canned Goods", by Armin W. Riley, December 1934, pp. 19. Address: Consumers' Project, Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (g) "Quality Standards for Canned Goods", Supplement II to Bulletin No. III. Address: Consumers' Project, Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (h) "Government Grading of Canned Fruits and Vegetables", by Paul Williams, June 1935, pp. 16. Address: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (i) "Labeling Canned Foods". A Symposium appearing in the Journal of Home Economics, September 1935, pp. 425-31. A reprint of this article is available from the American Home Economics Association, Mills Building, Washington, D. C. Price 10 cents.





## 2. DEFINITION OF SUB-STANDARD CANNED FOODS

When Congress passed in 1930 the McNary Mapes Amendment to the Food and Drugs Act they authorized the Food and Drug Administration to set up minimum quality standards for canned foods. Under this provision such minimum standards have been set up for canned cherries, peas, peaches, pears, apricots, tomatoes, and mushrooms. Any can of these products falling below the standard prescribed by the Food and Drug Administration must bear the statement BELOW U. S. STANDARD - GOOD FOOD - NOT HIGH GRADE.

## EXHIBIT:

Select one of the seven kinds of fruits and vegetables classified under the McNary Mapes Amendment which also is available in A, B, C, grades. Buy one can each labeled with A, B, C grades, and a BELOW U. S. STANDARD. Pour the contents of these cans into bowls or trays so that the members may see the difference in quality.

## QUESTIONS:

- (a) Remembering that all canned food must be wholesome under the Food and Drugs Act, what are some uses for "BELOW U. S. STANDARD" canned products?
- (b) What other canned products do you think should be added to the list defined by the Food and Drug Administration under the McNary Mapes Amendment?
- (c) What is the "slack fill" requirement of the Mapes Amendment?

## REFERENCES:

- (a) Food and Drug Administration Service and Regulatory Announcement No. 4. Gives the minimum requirements of quality and fill for the seven products now defined under the McNary Mapes Amendment, and contains a copy of the Amendment itself. 12 pp. Address: Food and Drug Administration, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (b) The Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Agriculture. Miscellaneous Publication 48. This bulletin is not a specific reference on the McNary Mapes Amendment but will answer general questions about the enforcement of the Food and Drugs Act. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 5 cents.





### 3. DEFINITIONS OF FOOD PRODUCTS

The Food and Drugs Act of 1906 provides that no adulterated or misbranded food or drug product should be sold in interstate commerce. The Act, however, failed to define any of the products. The Food and Drug officials were then confronted with such problems as: How much butterfat must cream contain before it can be called cream, how much water may cheese contain and still be called cheese, how much water may extracted honey contain and still be called honey? In order to have some basis for enforcing the law the Food and Drug Administration through a Food Definitions Committee prepares identity definitions for products. The definitions do not have the force of law and in court actions the Food and Drug Administration must show in each case that they are the commonly accepted standard for that particular product. A copy of these definitions may be secured by writing the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C., for Definitions and Standards for Food Products, Service and Regulatory Announcements No. 2.

In 1923 Congress set an identity standard for butter by passing a law stating that it must be made exclusively from milk or cream and contain not less than 80 percent butterfat. This is the only food product defined by Federal law.

During the last session of Congress an effort was made to secure a new Food and Drugs Law with a provision that the food definitions of the Food Definitions Committee would automatically become law as soon as proclaimed by the Secretary of Agriculture.

#### EXHIBIT:

Bring to the meeting several jars of jam: (1) homemade jam, (2) a jar of jam purchased at the grocery store, (3) a jar labeled imitation jam, and (4) a jar of jam sold under a distinctive trade name not called jam or preserves but some kind of "spread". Let the group compare the known facts regarding the percentage of fruit in each.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) Why was it necessary to have definitions of foods for the enforcement of the Food and Drugs Act?
- (b) How are these definitions drawn up?
- (c) Give some examples of definitions of identity. When may a chocolate compound be called milk chocolate? What is the difference between ordinary tomato purée and tomato paste? What is the difference between evaporated milk and condensed milk? Show how these and other food definitions protect consumers.
- (d) Give an example of a food definition which is Federal law and one that is only a department regulation of the Food and Drug Administration. Would it benefit consumers if the status of these department regulations were changed so that they automatically become Federal law when proclaimed by the Secretary of Agriculture?





## REFERENCES:

- (a) "Definitions and Standards For Food Products", Food and Drug Administration Service and Regulatory Announcements No. 2. Address: Food and Drug Administration, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (b) "American Chamber of Horrors", by Ruth DeForest Lamb, 1936, 418 pp. The use of distinctive trade names so as not to come under the definitions set up by the Food and Drug Administration is discussed on pages 162-171. Address: Farrar and Rinehart, New York, N. Y. Price \$2.50.
- (c) Outstanding Provisions of the Proposed New Federal Food and Drugs Act (Senate Bill 5). A series of mimeographed bulletins by the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (d) "Trade Practice Rules for the Preserve Manufacturing Industry", September 12, 1936. Address: Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C.

## 4. LABELING REGULATION

The United States Food and Drugs Act provides that labels on foods and drugs must not be misleading. The Food and Drug Administration maintains a careful watch for violations of this law. Consumers can help in this protective effort, first, by knowing the law, second, by giving close attention to reading labels, and third, by bringing questionable labels to the notice of the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C.

## EXHIBIT:

Bring to the meeting three or four cans of one kind of fruit or vegetable which give different types of label information about the product involved. Compare the information on the labels with the contents. Work out in the meeting an ideal label for this product. A similar study of canned goods is described in "A Study on Labeling of Certain Canned Goods", by the Homemakers Section of the District of Columbia Home Economics Association, Mills Building, Washington, D. C. Price 25 cents.

## QUESTIONS:

- (a) What are some examples of misleading labels?
- (b) How does the Food and Drug Administration proceed in cases involving a violation of the labeling regulations of the Administration?
- (c) What fines were imposed in some typical cases?

## REFERENCES:

- (a) Write the Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C., for "Notices of Judgment which give the record of labeling cases. They will be sent without charge.
- (b) The Food and Drug Administration Miscellaneous Publication No. 48, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Price 5 cents.
- (c) Limitations of the Food and Drugs Act of 1906 - Display Book. A series of pictures of displays some of which involve labeling. Address: Food and Drug Administration, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. This book is not for sale but may be borrowed for short periods of time.





## 3. FORMULATION OF SPECIFICATIONS, COMMERCIAL STANDARDS, AND CODES OF SIMPLIFIED PRACTICE

All of the activities listed in the above heading are activities of the Bureau of Standards, or of the Federal Specifications Executive Committee which is headed by the Director of the Bureau of Standards. The "willing to certify" procedure and the labeling plan of the Bureau of Standards help the consumer by enabling him to buy quality on the basis of definitely known specifications and standards. The codes of simplified practice aid the consumer by eliminating needless varieties of a product.

## EXHIBIT:

Secure several lists of "willing to certify" manufacturers from the Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C., so that your group may see what they are. Ask the Bureau of Standards to suggest some manufacturers from which you might secure labels which would illustrate the operation of the labeling plan. Also secure a copy of "List of Publications of Interest to Household Purchasers". From this bulletin select some pamphlets for a small consumer display illustrating the work of the Bureau of Standards.

## QUESTIONS:

- (a) What procedure is used to establish a commercial standard -- a federal specification -- a code of simplified practice?
- (b) What types of commodities are involved in the certification and labeling plans?
- (c) Just how do specifications and commercial standards protect both the government and the consumer?
- (d) What representation does the consumer have in drawing up a commercial standard? Do you have any suggestion as to how the consumer might more effectively participate in this program?
- (e) How widely must a commercial standard be accepted to be officially published by the Bureau of Standards?
- (f) Does the Government guarantee the product which carries a commercial standard label? Is there any check to see that goods which carry a certification label really meet the requirements of the standard?
- (g) Does the commercial standards program save the consumer any money?

## REFERENCES:

- (a) "When the Government Shops", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, July 13, 1936, page 6. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.
- (b) "Simplified Practice, Its Purpose and application", Letter Circular 410. Address: Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (c) "List of Publications of Interest to Household Purchasers", Letter Circular 416. Address: Bureau of Standards, Washington D. C. Free.
- (d) "Constructive Standardization -- An Aid to Better Living", an address by Daniel C. Roper, Secretary of Commerce, January 1935. Address: Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C. Free.



- (e) "Testing at the National Bureau of Standards in Relation to Over-the-Counter Buying", mimeographed. Address: Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (f) "Federal Specifications", Federal Standard Stock Catalog, Price List 75, February 1936, 23 pp. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (g) "The Certification Plan, Its Significance, Scope and Application to Selected Federal Specifications and Commercial Standards", mimeographed. Address: Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C. Free.

## 6. PROHIBITION OF UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES

The Federal Trade Commission has power to prohibit trade practices which are unfair to competitors. Unfair competition includes, among other things, certain kinds of selling schemes, unfair advertising, and misbranding. The elimination of these questionable schemes gives consumers a greater opportunity to know what they are buying.

Consumers need to keep in mind that under the Federal Trade Act the Commission can prohibit only advertising which is unfair to business competitors and not advertising which is unfair only to the consumer.

### EXHIBIT:

Look through your supply of Federal Trade Commission Press Releases mentioned in reference (a) below. See if you can find in back copies of magazines and newspapers advertisements which have been stopped by the Federal Trade Commission. If you find any examples of banned advertising post them along with the press release.

### QUESTIONS:

- (a) How does the Federal Trade Commission proceed against unfair trade practices?
- (b) What is a cease and desist order of the Federal Trade Commission?
- (c) How is a cease and desist order enforced?
- (d) What other proposed legislation provides consumer protection from misleading advertisements?
- (e) What are some of the ways in which consumers may help along the movement for more informative advertising?
- (f) What are some good examples of informative advertising which have been noticed by members of your group recently?

### REFERENCES:

- (a) Federal Trade Commission Press Releases. Ask for at least four sets. Press releases are sent once or twice a month to persons who request them. Address: The Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D. C.
- (b) Annual Report of the Federal Trade Commission for the year ending June 30, 1935, pp. 57-71 list types of unfair competition.



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- (c) Limitations of the Federal Food and Drugs Act of 1906 -- Display Book. Loaned for a limited period -- not for sale. Contains a display page, "A Few False Advertisements from Current Publications".
- (d) "What Labels Tell Us About The Goods We Buy", by J. V. Coles. Magazine article appearing in Practical Home Economics, November 1934, pp. 320-321. Address: Practical Home Economics, 468 Fourth Avenue, New York City.
- (e) Outstanding Provisions of the Proposed New Food and Drugs Act. Senate Bill No. 5. Section Two of this report deals with advertising. Address: Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (f) Wheeler-Rayburn Bill. Write your Congressman for a copy. This Bill provides for an increase in the powers of the Federal Trade Commission.
- (g) "The Federal Trade Commission", by Thomas C. Blaisdell, Jr. 1932. See Part I - The Maintenance of Fair Competition. Published by the Columbia University Press, New York City.

#### 7. POLICING OF PUBLICITY SENT BY MAIL

One of the duties of the Chief Inspector's Office of the Post Office Department is to close the mails to all persons using them with fraudulent intent.

#### EXHIBIT:

Write the Solicitor of the Post Office Department, Washington, D. C., for several copies of postal fraud orders. Write the Chief Inspector, Post Office Department, Washington, D. C., for a number of copies of recent press releases. After explaining these two types of documents in your meeting, circulate them among interested club members.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) What are some typical examples of fraudulent schemes which have been banned from the mails?
- (b) What procedure does the Chief Inspector use in closing the mails to a firm or person who is attempting to defraud the public?
- (c) What happens to mail addressed to a person to whom the mails have been closed?

#### REFERENCES:

- (a) "Fake Eye Specialists Exposed", Press Release, October 5, 1936. Address: Chief Inspector, Post Office Department, Washington, D. C., Free.
- (b) The Chief Inspector issues a small mimeographed bulletin explaining the work of his department. Address: Chief Inspector, Post Office Department, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (c) "The Run for Your Money", by Ellison and Brock, 1935, 259 pp. Some of the frauds described in this book involved use of the mails. Address: Dodge Publishing Company, 116 East 16th Street, New York, N. Y., \$2.50.





## PROGRAM SERIES III

### HOW INDUSTRY ANSWERS CONSUMER QUESTIONS ON QUALITY

#### 1. INFORMATIVE LABELING

Forward-looking industrial leaders are taking a real interest in helping the consumer to buy intelligently. Consumers would do well to note and to encourage these progressive steps.

#### EXHIBIT:

Ask the members of your group several meetings before this one to turn in to you any labels of the informative type. Write the companies mentioned in the reference material as having outstanding labels for additional copies of their labels. Group the labels on a bulletin board according to commodities for easy comparison.

If you wish additional clothing label exhibit material you may borrow a set of ten posters, each 16 by 22 inches, from the Bureau of Home Economics. These posters show typical labels now attached to clothing and yard goods. The exhibit may be borrowed for a limited period preferably not to exceed one week. Address: Bureau of Home Economics, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) What are the chief advantages of informative labeling to the manufacturer,-to the store owner,-to the sales person,-to the buyer?
- (b) Do you think consumers appreciate informative labeling sufficiently to make it worthwhile to the manufacturer? Has any member of your group written to a manufacturer to comment favorably on a well-prepared labeling program?
- (c) What are the most effective ways in which consumers can work for informative labeling?

#### REFERENCES:

- (a) "Labels on the Clothes We Buy", by C. L. Scott. A magazine article appearing in the Journal of Home Economics, November 1934, pp. 546-50. Illustrated. Published by American Home Economics Association, Mills Building, Washington, D. C.
- (b) "What Labels Tell Us About the Goods we Buy", by J. V. Coles. A magazine article appearing in Practical Home Economics, November 1934, pp. 320-321. Published by Practical Home Economics, 468 Fourth Avenue, New York, New York.
- (c) "Informative Labeling for Rugs", National Consumer News, September 25, 1936. Published by National Consumer News, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.
- (d) "Informative Labeling is Proved Practical", National Consumer News, July 25, 1936, page 3. Published by National Consumer News, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.



## PROGRAM SERIES III

### 2. APPROVAL SERVICES AND TESTING LABORATORY

A number of stores and mail order houses maintain testing laboratories. Contrasted with the store-owned testing laboratory is the independently-owned approval service. Approval systems have multiplied so rapidly that the Association of Consulting Chemists and Chemical Engineers has sent an official request to the American Standards Association asking them to set up standards for such agencies. Consumers would then have some basis for judging their worth. During the last ten years three independent services to test and rate consumer goods financed by consumers, have been established.

#### EXHIBIT:

Write to the American Standards Association, 29 West 39th Street, New York, N. Y., for their bulletin containing the request of the Association of Consulting Chemists and Chemical Engineers for Standards for Approval Services. The last four pages of this bulletin reproduce a large number of the seals of approval. Mount these for a bulletin board display.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) Do you think the American Standards Association should set up standards for approval services?
- (b) Do approval services have special advantages over a manufacturer's guarantee?
- (c) Are approval services which have a financial interest in whether or not the material being tested is passed, free to render an impartial judgment on the product?
- (d) What are the advantages and disadvantages to consumers of (1) the store-owned testing laboratory, (2) the independent approval service, (3) the magazine-owned approval service, (4) the independent service to test and rate consumer goods on a subscription basis?

#### REFERENCES:

- (a) "A Trip Through the A. G. A. Laboratory", 1934, 26 pp., illustrated. American Gas Association, New York, N. Y.
- (b) "Official Rules of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association", 1934, 33 pp. American Medical Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- (c) "The Testing of Merchandise by Department Stores", by E. Freedman, An article appearing in the Journal of Home Economics, September 1930, pp. 732-734. Discusses the types of testing done in the testing laboratories and lists some of the problems yet to be solved.
- (d) "The Organization, Purpose, and Methods of Underwriters' laboratories", Ed. 3, 1931, 15 pp., illustrated. National Board of Fire Underwriters Chicago, Illinois.





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- (e) "Certification and Labeling Activities in Sixty Commodity Fields", by Agnew and McNair. American Standards Association Bulletin, January 1932, pp. 1-23. Published by the American Standards Association, 29 West 39th Street, New York, N. Y.
- (f) The following independent rating services for consumer goods will send a statement describing their operation free on request:

Consumers' Research, Inc., Washington, N. J.  
Inter-mountain Consumers' Service, 982 S. Pennsylvania  
Avenue, Denver, Colo.  
Consumers' Union of the United States, 22 East 17th  
Street, New York, N. Y.

### 3. TRUTH IN ADVERTISING MOVEMENT

Better Business Bureaus are agencies set up by advertising and business men to eliminate questionable selling schemes and deceptive advertising. Visit your local or a nearby Better Business Bureau and get acquainted with its work.

#### EXHIBIT:

From your local or a nearby Better Business Bureau secure copies of their monthly bulletin and their pamphlet publications. Write the National Better Business Bureau, Chrysler Building, New York, N. Y., for pamphlet material. Prepare a table display of this literature.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) A recent news story reports that rabbit fur is now sold under ninety different names. Write the Boston Better Business Bureau for a copy of "Guide to Retail Store Advertising", Cost \$1.00. Pages 30-31 of this booklet are devoted to standards for fur advertisements and labels. Study local practices in this field. Use this booklet to study other kinds of advertising. What are your conclusions?
- (b) Find out from the manager of the local Better Business Bureau some of the things which hinder their work. What can your group do to help?

#### REFERENCES:

- (a) "The Run for Your Money", by Ellison and Brock, 1935, 258 pp. Address: Dodge Publishing Company, 116 East 16th Street, New York, N. Y., \$2.50
- (b) "The Fight For Truth in Advertising", by H. J. Kenner., Address: American Federation of Advertising, 330 West 42nd Street, New York, New York.





## PROGRAM SERIES IV

### CONSUMER QUESTIONMARKS ON QUANTITY

There are two problems involved in the quantity of goods consumers can get: first, the total amount of goods on the market; second, the amount an individual purchaser gets for his expenditure.

Most people realize today that there are many different kinds of controls which directly or indirectly tend to limit the amount of foods that come to market. There is control directly by industry which may choose to reduce the quantity of goods produced rather than cut the price, when consumers' power to buy shrinks as in a depression. Under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration farmers achieved for the first time a measure of control over their production and marketing. There is control through laws which give locally produced goods special distinction over goods produced somewhere else in the country or abroad. In Florida, for instance, all eggs from outside the State must be sold and branded conspicuously on the cases or cartons as "Shipped Eggs", and cannot be sold as fresh eggs under any condition. There is control through licenses and taxes which make it expensive to sell certain products or to engage in trade. In Wisconsin, for instance, manufacturers of oleomargarine must pay \$1,000 annually for a license permitting them to sell their product in that State. Again there are peddler licenses requiring peddlers to pay annual fees, for example, \$20.00 for a food peddler, \$45.00 for a peddler with one horse, and \$75.00 for one using a team or auto. There is control through rate regulation and regulation of capital investment as in the case of public utilities. There is control through transportation rates which give preferences in certain markets to certain producing areas. There is control through sanitary regulations, as in the case of milk ordinances and their administration which may determine the number of farmers who can ship milk for fluid use into the city.

These and other types of control, direct and indirect, affecting the amount of goods reaching consumer markets raise many questions of great importance to consumers. No thorough discussion of basic consumer problems can ignore them. This program, however, is limited to discussing the second of the questions stated above: how can an individual consumer be sure he is getting the greatest quantity for the money he has to spend?

#### 1. READING THE LABEL

##### EXHIBIT:

Bring to the meeting a scale which has been checked for accuracy by the City Sealer. Ask each member of the group to bring to the meeting one or two products whose labels show net weight of contents. At the meeting, open these packages, weigh the contents, check weight against the weight marked on the label.



## QUESTIONS:

- (a) How many in the group know how many ounces or pounds of food they get when they buy: bread? canned goods? other packaged foods, such as tea, coffee, crackers, olive oil?
- (b) What goods sold in interstate commerce must bear a mark of their net contents?
- (c) What goods sold in intrastate commerce must bear such a mark?
- (d) Are there any advantages in nationally uniform weight labeling requirements?
- (e) What protection against misbranding the weight does the Federal government provide in the case of foods? Other products?
- (f) What protection do your State or local governments provide?

## REFERENCES:

- (a) "Regulations for the Enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act", Section 8, paragraph 3, Regulation 26. S. R. A., F. D. No. 1, Address: Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (b) Federal Trade Commission
- (c) Inquire from your Secretary of State and city government for State and local laws and regulations regarding weight labeling.

## 2. WATCHING YOUR WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

## EXHIBIT:

Set before the group one standard each of mass, length, capacity, such as a pound, a yardstick, and a quart. Also a weighing scale.

## QUESTIONS:

- (a) How many of the group watch the salesman as he weighs or measures the goods bought?
- (b) Who checks the accuracy of those weights and measures?
- (c) How much money was appropriated last year for this service?
- (d) How often are the scales used by your grocer checked for accuracy?
- (e) What is the agency in your State which has charge of weights and measures?
- (f) How often does this State agency check its weights and measures against the national standards?
- (g) What does the National Bureau of Standards do to protect your weights and measures?
- (h) Are there any regulations controlling the size of food containers?

## REFERENCES:

- (a) "Weights and Measures Administration", Handbook No. 11, National Bureau of Standards. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., 70 cents.





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- (b) Inquire from your city and State governments as to City and State laws and regulations regarding control over weights and measures.
- (c) "Watch Your Weights and Measures", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, January 12, 1934, page 5. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (d) "Help Yourselves to Honest Measures", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, December 3, 1934, page 8. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (e) "False Bottoms Up", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, February 23, 1934, page 4. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.

#### 3. COMPARING UNIT COSTS

##### EXHIBIT:

- (a) Bring to the meeting four cans of tomatoes, each a different size. Have ready to display to the group a copy of the "Cost-Weight-Table", prepared by the New York State College of Home Economics, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. With the aid of this chart, estimate the cost per pound of the tomatoes in each can.
- (b) Get from a local grocer his prices for the following foods: Potatoes (by pound and by bushel); apples (by pound and by bushel); sugar (by pound and by 10-pound bag); vinegar (by smallest bottle and by pint); flour (by pound and by 24-pound bag); cornmeal (by pound and by 10-pound bag).

##### QUESTIONS:

- (a) How many ounces of food are contained in the usual can sizes found on the market?
- (b) How much does the food in each cost per pound? (Figured with the aid of the Cornell chart).
- (c) How much can consumers have per pound by buying such staples as the above in the larger quantities?
- (d) How many of the group plan their food expenditures a week in advance?
- (e) How many have storage space for storing the larger quantities suggested above?
- (f) How many can budget their money so as to afford to buy these larger quantities?

##### REFERENCES:

- (a) "How Cans Compare", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, October 5, 1936, page 10. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (b) "Pennies, Pounds, and Privileges", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, May 20, 1936, page 6. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.





## PROGRAM SERIES V

### CONSUMER QUESTION~~MARKS~~ ON PRICE

Price problems of consumers are bound up with many other things. Some of the more obvious of these other things are: the quantity of goods on the market; the amount of money all consumers have to spend; the competition between goods for consumers' pocketbooks; the cost of producing, processing, marketing products; profits; the control some people or firms may have over sources of supply, or over ways of making or marketing goods; the control of utility rates by the government.

Thorough discussion of these relationships would require much more time than, it is assumed, your group can devote to it. There is suggested here, however, a list of questions which will open up many fields of inquiry.

#### QUESTIONS:

- (a) What is a fair price? Is 15 cents a pound a fairer price for pork chops than 20 cents? Is \$500 a fairer price for an automobile than \$550? Are there any bottom limits below which consumers do not wish prices to fall? Are there any top limits above which consumers do not wish prices to rise?
- (b) Are there any costs in production or distribution which could be cut to the advantage of consumers? Do you want the privilege of buying on credit and are you willing to pay for it? Do you wish the privilege of returning goods and are you willing to pay for it? Do you wish the privilege of delivery and are you willing to pay for it? Do you get benefits from advertising and how much are you willing to pay for them?
- (c) What are some of the ways in which prices are controlled? Why does the government sometimes control the price of commodities or services? How does it do this? Should consumers be represented in such control? How should consumer representatives be chosen?
- (d) Do cooperatives reduce prices?

#### REFERENCES:

- (a) "Government and the Consumer", published by the National League of Women Voters, Washington, D. C., Price 25 cents.
- (b) "What are Fair Prices?", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, September 17, 1934, page 10. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.
- (c) "Consumer Viewpoint on Returned Goods", Domestic Commerce Series 87. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., 5 cents.



- (a) "Where Your Food Money Goes", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, August 24, 1936, page 12. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (e) "Consumers Go Into Business", Harpers Magazine, August 1936.
- (f) "Cutting the Cost of Living by Cooperation", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, August 13, 1934, Page 5. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C. Free.
- (g) "The Cost of a \$5 Dress", by Frances Perkins, Survey Graphic, February 1933, pp. 75-78.
- (h) "Do You Buy Cooperatively?", CONSUMERS' GUIDE, December 16, 1935, Page 3. Address: Consumers' Counsel Division, Washington, D. C. Free.



- (1) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (2) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (3) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (4) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (5) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (6) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (7) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (8) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (9) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.
- (10) "The First Year of the New Government," COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE, Washington, D. C., 1900.

## PROGRAM SERIES VI

### PANEL DISCUSSION: THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INTELLIGENT BUYING

This meeting is conceived as a discussion period for the purpose of summarizing and making a final estimate of the knowledge you have obtained.

The general procedure for a panel discussion is to have a group of five to ten persons seated behind a table at the front of the room. The chairman stands at the end of the table and opens the discussion by a brief statement of the problem for discussion. Following this comes the exchange of ideas between the members of the panel group with occasional questions from the audience.

Much of the success of a panel discussion period depends on securing a group which represents different points of view. For example, a panel made up of several housewives, a trained home economist, a store clerk, and a store owner or buyer would be sure to have varying points of view on the subject of this discussion. Caution the members of the panel that you do not want orations, but rather brief, pointed statements of their views. The chairman may have to be firm with members of the audience who persist in giving speeches rather than asking questions.

In starting the discussion have some member lead off with a very short statement of the fundamentals of intelligent buying. Then instead of getting another statement of the problem, select some controversial point in the statement and get an opinion on that. At the end of the discussion the chairman should summarize or ask some member of the panel to do so.



THE PROBLEM OF THE FUTURE

This meeting is devoted to a discussion of the future of the movement and a plan of action for the future.

The general program for a year's discussion is to have a series of five or six papers read before a committee of the future of the movement. The papers will be read at the end of the year and given the discussion by a committee of the future of the movement. Following this series of papers will be a series of papers on the future of the movement.

One of the papers of a year's discussion will be on the future of the movement. This paper will be read by a committee of the future of the movement. The paper will be read at the end of the year and given the discussion by a committee of the future of the movement. Following this series of papers will be a series of papers on the future of the movement.

In addition to the discussion there will be a series of papers on the future of the movement. These papers will be read at the end of the year and given the discussion by a committee of the future of the movement. Following this series of papers will be a series of papers on the future of the movement.